ASSORTED YARNS FROM WESTERN CANADIANA

From Home to Home, Hill, 1885 Kamoose

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"Up early 1882 and went to breakfast at the only hotel that there is in McLeod, if, indeed, one may dignify by the name of an hotel a very common wooden shanty. The gentleman who keeps it goes by the name of Kamoose and as he himself told me his own story of the origin of this name I don't know that there is any reason why I should not narrate it to my readers.

Mr. Henry Taylor had originally begun life as a missionary, but, having given up that profession, had come in from Montana with the whisky traders in 1872, and had ditinguished himself a good deal in thatline in his dealings with the Indians. Upon the Mounted Police coming into the country in 1874, he had given up the whisky trading in common with all the rest of the crew, and had started a small hotel in the fort.

While engaged in business as a whisky trader, he had stolen a squaw from one of the Bloods, though according to his own account he had not stolen her, but had "traded her" for a gallon of whisky; but however that may be, he was not allowed to r main in peaceful possession of the lady, as the Blood from whom he had stolen her was on his trail, intending to kill both him and the swuaw; and, as Kamoose prudently observed, that there was no use in having anybody killed about it, and he thought that the best thing he could do was to pass her on, and so he traded her to somebody else--perhaps one of the Bloods--for half a gallon of whisky. The Bloods, however, nicknamed him "Kamoose" signifying in their language "robber" and the name has always remained to him, and by that title he and his hotel are known.

~~If the outraged Blood husband had caught them he wo~~

....."Kamoose was a kind, genial, square built and with a considerable attachment to the Indians, and more especially to a lot of little Indian children who seemed to make their home of his house, and I am bound to say this for Kamoose, that I only wish that hotel-keepers whose bills I have had the honour of making acquaintance with in European lands deserved the title of "robber" as little as he did in that respect. The house consisted of a kitchen with a very good stove, where the cook produced very good meals, and not least to be remembered is that great luxury of the West, the slap-jacks, the cakes either of flour or buckwheat, which are sent up in little piles of three deep at the end of every meal, and which ar eaten with butter and molasses, fresh and hot as they are required; the same that in Russia, our European land of most excellent bread, are called "bleenie". Adjoining the kitchen was the dining room, with three or four tables and benches in rows and next to that a large low room, which was the sleeping-room, accommodating thirty or forty, and where everybody, whites and Indians, slept on the ground, wrapped up in such buffalo robes or blankets as they possessed. The terrible smell and horrible dirt of this dormitory was such as to frighten any person from sleeping there unless they were to the manner born; it was through this dormitory that we had to pass to go into the dining-room. The meals were indeed excellent and well worth the fifty cents which were paid for them."

Sheriff Healey gave me an account of the commencement of whisky trading in our Canadian territory in 1872, which as he allowed me to take it down from his lips, he will not, I think, object to my narrating here.

"In 1863 I fitted out an outfit for prospecting in the Hudson Bay Territory. The Hudson Bay Company found that we should be their competitors, and although they had promised that they would sell us provisions and I took excellent horses and a $10,000 outfit, when my men got there they refused them food during the winter, giving them 1s. a load for cutting wood, and selling them provisions at 6d. a pound. They were starving, and had to come home. I met them here (Fort Benton) and I sent up word to the Hudson Bay men that I would be even with them, and so in 1869 Alf Hamilton and I got up $25,000 and started at Whoop-up with the Indians. We got all the trade, and as the Hudson Bay men looked to the Bloods to supply them with meat for their northern stations, and we got all they had, we were starving them out. We took up fifty gallons of alcohol, not so much for the value of the goods it would bring in, as thereby to secure the Indian trade; we carried this on till the Hudson Bay Company made a handle of this whisky business and got the Canadian Government to pass the prohibition law and send down the Mounted Police. Wonderful stories were then got up about us in the New York papers; it was said that two notorious and powerful desperadoes of the names of Healey and Ham lton, with known men of a most daring character, had seized artillery belonging to the United States government, and were prepared to hold the country against the Canadian forces. I was never intending to resist them or the law in any shape, so on the arrival of the police I at once struck out for Colonel McLeod, and went to him. He could not believe that the small man whom he saw

before him was the gigantic outlaw of those New York stories, but I soon satisfied hi . I gave him up all the whisky there was there, it was all spilled, and the whole thing came to an end...." This began and ended this worst per od of Indian trading.